

WHCOA Topic Area: Our Community

Issue: Liveable Communities

Overview of Current Issue Status: The United States is facing the aging of the largest demographic cohort, 77 million baby boomers, in its history. The Older Americans Act has successfully established a national infrastructure whose core mission is to plan and coordinate services for an aging population. The expertise of Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native American Agencies and their partners, which include local elected officials in their communities, are the logical choice to engage stakeholders in developing strategies for liveable communities and disseminating best practices nationwide. In addition, academia is involved in ongoing, multiple intergenerational and other community-based participatory research and implementation.

Challenges: Over the course of the next three decades, the baby boomer generation will have a direct and dramatic impact on every community in the nation. The increase in the number of aging citizens will affect a host of policies and programs, including local units on aging, health and human services, land use, housing, transportation, public safety, workforce development, economic development, education/lifelong learning, and volunteerism/civic engagement. However, despite the demographic forecast, few communities have begun to prepare for the aging of their population, and no organization is charged with taking a systematic and comprehensive approach to addressing, developing, and implementing innovative changes that must occur over the next ten years.

Resolution:

The federal government is encouraged to coordinate policy in preparing for a dramatic increase in the aging population and acknowledge the rise in 55+ active living communities that attempt to keep pace with the needs of this population.

Create a new title within the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act to authorize State Units on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native Americans Agencies to prepare for the aging of the baby boomers, fostering livable communities.

Fund the new title on a non-formula basis with a minimum level of funding, and additional formula-based funding to increase subsidies to more heavily populated service areas with a 25% match requirement.

Establish a National Resource Center on Aging in Place to provide the necessary guidance, training and technical assistance to Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI Native American Agencies in their efforts to assist communities in developing liveable communities for all ages; and tap into the tremendous resources of academia to implement research that sustains and enhances communities.